

didn't see it coming in time and it landed in his lap. His scream rattled the windows and woke the baby, and got the next-door neighbor, Clete, on the phone to the cops, because he was sure that somebody had just been murdered at Ruth and Ellis' house.

PIZZA BLUES

Clete and his neighbor Ellis called De Nio's Pizza and had a big one delivered. Clete stifled the driver and carried the hot box out to the patio so they could sit in the lawn chairs and eat their feast to the sound of the pool filter's sighs.

Ellis lifted the first wedge, trailing a string of cheese all the way back to the box, but before he could bite into it Clete's wife's Chihuahua, Ginger, charged out the doggie door, leaped and snatched the fragrant triangle, and hit the ground running.

Ellis screamed, "YOU LITTLE BITCH," and jumped up and kicked at her, landing a glancing blow to her hindquarters, sending her spinning, with her booty, into the deep end of the pool.

Clete said, "I'd leave that dog alone if I were you, Ellis. That's Juanita's baby."

But Ellis didn't listen: he grabbed the long handled, two-pronged fork from the rack on the side of Clete's BBQ and ran around the side of the pool, stabbing at the dog-paddling thief, while Clete giggled and said, "Get her, Queequeg, get her."

Juanita came home from the mall and caught him at it. She kicked his ass, and she kicked Clete's ass too, for not standing up and protecting her baby. Then she tossed them both into the pool and scooped Ginger to safety with the long-handled skimming net.

Ginger got a quick towel drying and a fresh slice of the pie, and the men got their brains rattled by the handle end of the metal skimming net, wielded by Juanita. She bounced it off one head and then the other, forcing Clete and Ellis to seek temporary refuge under the cool, silent water, where they communicated with grunts and squeals and hand gestures.